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RUEHNEH/AMCONSUL HYDERABAD 1013
RUEHKKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 2431
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6353
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 2876
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 9736
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NP, AC, PM

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REPORT: BLAST OUTSIDE INDIAN EMBASSY IN KABUL

¶11. SUMMARY: The blast outside the Indian embassy in Kabul on October 8, 2009, the second attack in two years allegedly targeting the Indian Mission in Afghanistan, generated widespread reporting in the Indian media today. Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao on Friday arrived in Kabul to review the situation and planned to meet with President Hamid Karzai. Indian Ambassador Jayant Prasad was reported saying the "Indian Embassy was the target." Reports said that the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. India's envoy to the United Nations Hardeep Singh Puri reportedly asked the world leaders to negotiate an international treaty to tackle terrorism expeditiously. Initial commentary in today's press is given below. Editorial opinion appearing in the coming days will be reported in subsequent cables. END SUMMARY.

"TALIBAN OWNS UP TO KABUL BLAST, SHIFTS FOCUS FROM ISI," THE TIMES OF INDIA, English daily

¶12. In promptly claiming responsibility for the suicide attack outside the Indian embassy in Kabul on Thursday, the Taliban may have given the game away. Senior intelligence and security officials said this was nothing but a smokescreen created by the actual perpetrators to keep the focus away from ISI whose involvement in the July 2008 blast near the Indian embassy that left 60 dead is well acknowledged. "It is quite deliberate the way they have claimed responsibility. The timing of the latest attack is very important and it suggests that this too has been

executed by the perpetrators of last year's attacks including the ISI. It comes at a time when President Obama has initiated his two-pronged policy in the region -- war in Afghanistan and aid surge in Pakistan,"' said strategic affairs analyst Brahma Chellaney.

"PAKISTAN SENDS A MESSAGE VIA KABUL BOMBER," THE TELEGRAPH, English daily

¶3. A powerful but fortuitously aborted attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul today was Pakistan's message to India that its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) can hit Indian interests anytime, anywhere with impunity. It came exactly four days after Pakistan's foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who has stayed back in the US after his testy meeting with external affairs minister S.M. Krishna in New York on September 27, publicly warned that Indians "have to justify their interest" in Kabul.

"KABUL AGAIN," THE INDIAN EXPRESS, English daily

¶4. This time too, the Afghan foreign office has pointed to persons with "bases outside of Afghanistan", to those positioned against India-Afghanistan relations. Investigators should get firmer leads soon. India's personnel are not military people, they are engineers, doctors, teachers, and construction workers, all engaged in civilian activities and contributing to

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India's "soft" participation in nation-building there. Their induction and presence have nuanced Indian diplomacy in the region, and won local support. But this kind of strategic gain, as seen on Thursday, comes with huge risks to lives.

"ANOTHER ATTACK," NAVBHARAT TIMES, Hindi daily

¶5. With another blast targeted at the Indian Embassy in Kabul after more than a year, we may not squarely blame Pakistan, but it is time we ask Pakistan what happened to the probe it had promised the last time around. India also needs to be prepared for the day when America vacates Afghanistan, leaving a puppet regime and lots of mess behind.

"BLAST IN KABUL," HINDUSTAN, Hindi daily

¶6. Pakistan is trying to show America that terrorism in South Asia is a fall out of India's position on Kashmir. But America is not fully convinced yet. The bomb attack outside the Indian embassy on October 8 is a part of this covert attempt by Pakistan to convince America that such incidents are a sign of revolt against India's position on Kashmir.

"INDIA ON TARGET AGAIN," AMAR UJALA, Hindi daily

¶7. By attacking the Indian embassy in Kabul, Al Qaeda has made it clear that India is as much its enemy as America. In fact, for the Taliban and Al Qaeda, India is enemy no. 2, after the U.S. That no Indian was killed in this attack is a mere co-incidence. Afghanistan is a vexed situation. President Obama appointed Richard Holbrooke as special envoy to the region, but then the U.S. is all at sea. As for Al Qaeda and the Taliban, they are only growing stronger.
ROEMER